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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
October 8, 2008

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GOVERNOR PAWLENTY ANNOUNCES \$10 MILLION FOR MICRO-ENERGY AND CONSERVATION LOANS

~ Homeowners can use funds for solar, wind, other renewable energy projects ~

Saint Paul – Governor Pawlenty announced today that \$10 million is now available for micro-energy and conservation home improvement loans to help Minnesotans save on energy costs.

The program was proposed by the Governor in his 2008 State of the State Address as another way for Minnesota to expand homegrown energy, grow green collar jobs, and improve the environment.

“It’s more important than ever that we lead efforts to Americanize energy production and help homeowners lower their energy costs,” Governor Pawlenty said. “This program will fund low-interest loans for micro-energy technologies such as home-based solar, next-generation windmills, geothermal heating, and other renewable energy sources.”

Micro-energy and conservation loans will be made by the Fix-Up Fund, a statewide program that offers affordable, low-interest fixed-rate loans through Minnesota Housing’s large network of lending partners across the state. Funds are available from repayments of previously made loans.

Under the loan program, homeowners are encouraged to get an energy audit from their utility company to determine the most cost-effective energy-efficient improvements. Interested homeowners can then apply for the loans directly through a Fix-Up Fund lender. Lenders are listed at www.mnhousing.gov/consumers/lender.

Projects eligible for micro-energy and conservation loans include:

- Renewable energy generation, including solar thermal, solar electric and wind turbines or generators.
- Home improvements that are either Energy Star rated or qualify for a utility rebate, including high-efficiency furnaces, boilers, water heaters, combination boiler/water heater, central air, air or ground source heat pump, and lighting fixtures.
- Thermal envelope improvements, including insulation and air sealing.

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Fix-Up Fund loan guidelines are:

- Maximum loan amount is \$35,000
- Maximum loan term of 10 or 20 years, based on loan amount
- Maximum income at or below \$93,100
- Borrower must be year-round owner/occupant of the home
- Borrower may hire a contractor or do the work themselves
- Eligible uses include single-family home, duplex, tri-plex or quad

“These micro-energy and conservation loans will help Minnesotans with heating costs this winter while conserving energy over the long-term,” said Minnesota Housing Commissioner Tim Marx. “Homeowners who increase energy efficiency or renewable energy sources will make their homes more affordable as we confront rising energy costs.”

Last week, Governor Pawlenty announced that Minnesota received \$144.5 million in federal funds for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) for this year, nearly double the normal appropriation for Minnesota. The funding was released now to ensure states have the resources available to support their energy assistance programs as the weather turns colder.

LIHEAP is federally funded through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and administered by the Minnesota Department of Commerce through 38 local service providers around the state. The program helps low-income customers pay their heating bills through grant money paid directly to the utility company on behalf of the customer.

Minnesota also received additional funding for low income weatherization projects. The state currently serves 3,000 households with this program but will be able to expand that with the new allocation of \$16 million. The weatherization program provides home energy conservation audits, safety inspections and assessments of furnaces and indoor air quality.

For more information on energy efficiency, the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, or the Weatherization Assistance Program, contact the Minnesota Department of Commerce Energy Info Center:

- 651-296-5175 or toll free in Minnesota 1-800-657-3710
- Email: energy.info@state.mn.us
- On the web: www.energy.mn.gov Click on Energy Info Center

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